

Don't you dare!

written by David M. Weinberg | 10.11.2023

In memory of the brave Israeli soldier and singer-scholar of a soul, Yonadav Levenstein.

Pressures on Israel from Washington and other Western capitals are mounting to curtail the campaign to destroy Hamas, because of the humanitarian toll in Gaza.

Israeli government leaders must resist these pressures with all their might. They must persist in pounding Hamas-ISIS to smithereens until every last Hamas commander is dead, every last Hamas terror attack tunnel is destroyed, and every last Hamas missile bunker is obliterated.

That is the only justification for the tenure of this government; that is its promise to Israeli society. That is the only way Israel can restore basic security to a battered and traumatized public, the only way Israelis will return to their homes in the Negev and the Galilee.

It is the only way Israel can restore some of its deterrent posture and survive in the predatory Middle East. It is the only way Israel stands a chance of pushing back against radical Islam's attempt to strangle Israel and achieve regional hegemony.

The war cannot and must not end until Israel has achieved its legitimate military objectives in full, with no fudging, no obfuscations, and no hesitations. Israel cannot tolerate ceasefires along the way – no truces, no armistices, no fallbacks, no restrictions on its use of (overwhelming and simultaneously precise) force – until total victory is achieved.

Complete capitulation or annihilation of Hamas is the goal, nothing less. No more Hamas in Gaza, or in Judea and Samaria (the West Bank). No more Hamas terrorists alive elsewhere in the world either. They all must be hunted down and eliminated.

In the history of modern warfare, there is no more justified military campaign than this one. And only such a campaign to absolutely end the Hamas threat to Israel justifies the heavy losses that Israel already has suffered and the pain of

what almost certainly will be further losses.

Israeli leaders have no mandate from the Israeli public to call-off or scale-back the assault on Hamas. Would they do so, under pressure from well-meaning and fickle allies alike, Israelis will explode in anger, assuredly filling the streets of every city in this country with millions of protestors demanding that the war against Hamas be fully prosecuted. Compromise with Hamas would be defeat. Bending to US President Biden (who, it must be acknowledged, thus far has been rock solid in his backing of Israel) would be considered collapse.

OVER THE PAST TEN DAYS, Israel has buried more than 30 brave warriors, more than 30 fine and fearless young men pressed into military service to defend their country, many of them with tender wives and beautiful, little, now-orphaned, children.

One of them was my beloved young friend Yonadav Levenstein, may the Heavens avenge his death. Yonadav was a physical giant (known as the “Viking” of the Givati brigade’s elite reconnaissance unit) and a singer-scholar of a soul. He fought heroically in Nahal Oz on October 7-8, and then in Jabalya and Shati in Gaza before being felled by Palestinian barbarians who popped-out of a terrorist attack tunnel.

Just two months ago, I danced with him at his wedding to the delicate Hadar Karavani, singing together about happiness and joy in the streets of Jerusalem.

Yonadav was the youngest son of my closest friends, Leora and Dr. Michael (Mordechai) Levenstein of Maale Adumim, who like me made Aliyah from Canada many decades ago. Tragically, Michael died of cancer three years ago.

Michael’s last request, pressed on me the night before he passed away, was to assist Yonadav in his wish to serve in a frontline IDF combat unit. Michael knew that Yonadav’s deepest desire, and in retrospect I guess his ultimate task in life, was to fight for the freedom and safety of the Jewish People in the Land of Israel.

Yonadav’s eldest brother, Elnatan, a prominent lawyer and rising community figure, is a fighter for the Jewish People too, having served in an elite, secret commando unit on Israel’s southern border, and this month in an elite reserve unit on the northern border. I see Elnatan and his cohort as the next generation of Israel’s leaders, a new generation of principled and wise leaders whom this

country desperately needs.

Elnatan was laying in ambush against Hezbollah when he was called offline to travel home for Yonadav's funeral on Mount Herzl in Jerusalem. Standing over the fresh gravesite of his youngest brother, Elnatan gave majestic voice to the defiant demand that the Israeli government stand firm in pursuing the war goals without flinching.

This is what Elnatan said:

"Yonadav: You were intimately familiar with our people's history. You loved this country with all your heart. You built yourself up and fought to be accepted as a warrior in the Givati reconnaissance unit, where you excelled.

"Alas, now you too are part of our history; part of a bloody war that is a historical turning point. A tough but necessary war. A war for the future of our people in our land. A war that should have been over a long time ago, a war that your generation should not have had to fight.

"In Operation Pillar of Defense in 2012, I and my army unit, along with the entire IDF, were trained and ready to complete the task. We had detailed battle plans and received clear instructions - only to have these plans and orders cancelled repeatedly at the last moment. And over the years since then there were other opportunities (to crush the enemy) that were not taken.

"And now you, little Yonadav, the baby of our family, were forced to fight this fight on behalf of us all.

"This war must be Israel's last war! Otherwise, the price is too high. Yonadav, you and your comrades-in-arms did not die in battle so that others will have to die in yet another war in two- or five-years' time. The price that Israeli society has paid since that evil, horrible day of massacres on October 7, Simchat Torah 5784, is intolerable. No more!

"Therefore, I call from here upon the Prime Minister, the Minister of Defense, other government ministers and decisionmakers: Don't you dare stop! Don't you dare hesitate! Don't you dare fold!

"Don't you dare allow even one drop of fuel into accursed Gaza until the rats, the evil terrorists of Hamas-ISIS, those who murder Jewish babies and rape little

Jewish girls, those who rain rockets down upon all Israelis without discrimination – until they come out of their ratholes and are eliminated. Don't you dare!

"It is the obligation of the Government of Israel to ensure that every Israeli can live in quiet, peace, and security without fearing that terrorists will overrun their homes or fire missiles at them.

"David Ben-Gurion once said that 'Our future is not dependent on what the *goyim*, the nations of the world, say, but on what the Jews do.' And now is the time to do, to act decisively. We did not want to lose in battle Yonadav or any of our brave young men and women. But this war has been forced upon Israel, and we must finish it once and for all.

"I say to our government: The People of Israel stand firmly behind you for this purpose, putting aside all internal disagreements. We, our family, already have paid the highest price in grief. Our lives will never be the same. Now you must finish the job, for us, for the fallen soldiers, for our people, for the sake of future generations.

"And if you are not up to the task, if you don't have the guts to win the war – stand aside, vacate your seats at the cabinet table, so that others, better leaders, can take your place."

Published in The Jerusalem Post 10.11.2023 and Israel Hayom 12.11.2023.